ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) – A KEY ISSUE FOR THE FUTURE

The position of the WKO

Key positions on AI

To take advantage of the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence (AI) for Austria as a business location, and to support companies in leveraging AI as a key driving force, a road map that provides clear direction is required. The WKO's key positions on AI cover everything from ecosystems to education, infrastructure and research, through to dealing with regulations and inspiration for taking action.

Make Austria's AI ecosystem a European AI hotspot

A key AI building block must be to implement the business, economy and research ecosystem as set out in the Digital Austria Act. Existing initiatives must be better interlinked and resources used jointly. Successes must be made more visible at international level and sustainable financing for initiatives secured. The ecosystem must be an **opportunity to participate** and provide practical examples so that companies can take action quickly.

Enable life-long learning about and with AI

For AI to be applied across the board, knowledge about the applications, opportunities and risks of AI must be imparted. **Education about AI must be open to everyone** – whether students, trainees, entrepreneurs or inquisitive citizens. Staff in educational institutions who are qualified in AI should teach the foundations of AI and encourage independent and critical thinking. AI tools should be used in educational institutions. Low-threshold public and private training must be available throughout Austria.

Establish long-term formats for dialogue

The huge potential offered by AI can only be exploited by businesses when society accepts this technology. Stakeholders from politics, science, business, civil society and education must be strongly networked and in constant dialogue to **allay fears and highlight the opportunities offered by AI**. A variety of long-term exchange formats must be established. Results will be presented to the public in appropriate formats to make the complex connections clear, and to familiarise the public with AI at events.

Provide infrastructure and enable access

Only after successful digitalisation can companies use their own AI applications. **Critical success factors are computing power and data availability.** Data clusters must be further enhanced. Resources, particularly hardware, as well as the data infrastructure must be significantly expanded. Austria must enhance its involvement in the European High Performance Computing Programme (EuroHPC) and drive the strategic expansion of its high performance computing (HPC) infrastructure. Broadband access is a basic condition for using large data volumes, and its rollout must be significantly accelerated.

More funding for applied AI research and innovation

New, multi-level funding formats, especially for applied research, must be established. Austria must be attractive to excellent scientists and specialists; endowed professorships will be expanded for this purpose. **Scientific know-how must cover everything from theory to practical business application,** and businesses must be supported with their innovative projects. The goal is to use AI to create value in Austria, and to generate innovations "Made in Austria".

Strengthen cooperation and share knowledge

The interdisciplinary transfer of knowledge between non-university and university institutions and industry must be intensified by expanding funding formats, **strengthening existing centres and clusters,** and increasing the focus on AI. AI spin-offs should be encouraged and increased in number. Companies of all types must have access to AI-specific expertise – especially SMEs. Austria must also become more involved in scientific, economic and political discourse on AI at the international and European level.

Establish a service-oriented AI authority

Austrian companies are ready for the AI future, and so they deserve the optimal framework conditions to enable growth, prosperity and sustainable employment. Legislation such as the Data Governance Act must be enacted. **Advice, information, guidelines** as well as digital tools must all be available to enable companies to meet the demands of the AI Act. At the very least, a national AI field laboratory should be set up. The future AI authority must be strongly focused on service provision, to support and guide businesses.

Establish and finance an Austrian AI observatory

An Austrian AI observatory must be established and, as far as possible, integrated into existing organisational structures. The observatory should serve as a contact point, identifying AI trends, providing information on an AI map, and **collecting facts, figures and data about the AI ecosystem**. Potentials should be made visible and entrepreneurs inspired.

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